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**For More Information**  
Jeff Miller or Candice Johnson  
CWA Communications, 202-434-1168

### **Media Unions, Members of Congress Call on FCC Chairman Powell to Hold Full Public Hearings on Media Ownership**

#### ***Poll of Media Professionals Cites Declining Quality of News Coverage, Less Diversity of Opinion as Result of Industry Consolidation***

Washington, D.C. – On Capitol Hill today, unions representing half a million media workers joined with Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and other members of Congress in calling for full public hearings as the Federal Communications Commission reconsiders its rules on media ownership.

Rep. Hinchey, along with Reps. Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.), Jay Inslee (D-Wash.), and Diane Watson (D-Calif.) have been leading the fight in Congress to overturn the new FCC rules that eliminated restrictions on media concentration.

FCC Commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein also joined the news conference.

The FCC, compelled to re-examine its rule-making by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, now has an opportunity to “seek broad-based public input where the impact of such regulatory changes will be felt the most – local media markets,” the unions said in a letter to FCC Chairman Powell.

“That is precisely where our members work and where consumers get the bulk of their news, information and entertainment,” the unions said. The single field hearing held by the FCC last year was

1025 Vermont Avenue, N.W. – Suite 1030

Washington, D.C. 20005

Phone: (202) 638-0320

Fax: (202) 628-4379

Website: [www.dpeaflcio.org](http://www.dpeaflcio.org)

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“woefully insufficient” to determine the effect the proposed rule changes would have in an already highly concentrated media industry.

A poll of 400 workers from a cross section of print and broadcast news professionals, commissioned by four media unions, provides additional insight into the impact of continued media consolidation on news reporting, diversity of opinion and corporate control of the news. The unions are The Newspaper Guild (TNG-CWA), the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians (NABET-CWA) – both affiliates of the Communications Workers of America – the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), and the Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE).

The poll reveals that front-line media employees believe that industry consolidation already has compromised the quality of news reporting and they fear that further media concentration will continue the trend and lead to too much control over the news by a few corporate executives.

Conducted by Lauer Research Inc. of Washington, D.C., the survey indicated that the media, in the journalists’ view, face many serious problems affecting news quality and public credibility today.

“This scientific poll confirms what AFTRA has asserted – and has long been hearing from working media professionals ever since the excessive deregulation ignited by the 1996 Telecommunications Act and subsequent FCC actions: that media ownership consolidation is doing irreparable harm to local and national news coverage and thus to a key fabric of democracy in our country. Even as the literal number of entertainment, news and information outlets increases, actual decision-making, including news judgment, is falling into fewer and fewer hands,” said AFTRA President John Connolly.

“There has been a great deal of speculation regarding the deterioration of the quality of news as the result of media consolidation. Those polled work on the front lines of the very media news sources the vast majority of Americans get their news from and base their opinions, actions and futures on. This poll serves as a wake up call from those who deliver the news: that media consolidation adversely affects the lives of all Americans. The FCC must stop catering to the interests of media conglomerates and focus on what is in the best interest of the public,” states Mona Mangan, Executive Director, Writers Guild of America, East.

“Media workers, better than anyone else, understand the dire implications that further consolidation will have on their work and the public’s ability to access quality information. The results of this poll point up the need for more outreach by the FCC before the commissioners allow more contraction in the industry,” said Linda Foley, president of TNG-CWA.

John Clark, president of NABET-CWA, said “it’s clear that media workers understand the dangers of further media consolidation. Our task now is to educate the public and our congressional representatives on how such consolidation could impair the quality and diversity of the media in this country.”

Among the poll’s findings:

Nearly eight out of ten participants said there has been a lowering of journalism standards, with the most serious problem facing the industry being too much emphasis on the bottom line, in the view

of 83 percent of the participants. Other top concerns include the influence of ratings or circulation on coverage and programming (82 percent); a loss of credibility with the public (79 percent); a declining quality of community coverage (74 percent); incomplete reporting and errors (73 percent), and too little focus on complex issues (72 percent).

Many of the survey participants cited understaffing (73 percent) and lack of time and resources to do a professional job (68 percent) as trends that are threatening quality news reporting today. More than half said that employee morale has worsened at their news organization within the past two years.

Nearly eight out of ten survey participants predicted a negative impact if the Federal Communications Commission is allowed by Congress and the courts to further loosen restrictions over single-company market domination and cross-ownership of TV, radio and newspaper outlets.

The research firm interviewed 400 producers, reporters, editors, anchors, writers, artists and technicians working in print, television, radio and Internet communications. The sample was scientifically drawn from a universe of 41,000 media workers represented by the four organizations that commissioned the survey. A quarter of those surveyed described themselves as either a freelance, daily hire or temporary worker, reflecting the growing marginalization of jobs in the industry.

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Attached is a summary of the survey findings. The full report is available at [www.dpeaflcio.org](http://www.dpeaflcio.org).

For more information on individual unions, contact Sindy Gordon, Writers Guild of America, East, 212-767-7810; Rebecca Rhine, AFTRA, 415-391-7510; and Candice Johnson for CWA, 202-434-1168.